

**Public Testimony Before the Joint Appropriations Committee**  
**Thursday, February 11, 2011**

Senator Harp and Representative Geragosian , Co-Chairs:

I am Dr. Harvey Corson, Vice President of the Connecticut Association of the Deaf (CAD), speaking on behalf of Mr. Michael Finneran, President and the CAD. Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you and the Committee members about the Connecticut Commission on the Deaf and the Hearing Impaired (CDHI).

We understand that the State of Connecticut is facing a budget crisis in this present state of economy. The State sees a need to consolidate many agencies and proposes to merge the CDHI into the Department of Social Services (DSS).

We need to consider the following points:

1. Connecticut was the first state in the nation to establish the Commission, the kind of state agency to serve deaf and hard of hearing citizens. This became the role model for other states which subsequently established their state commissions/agencies.
2. CDHI is now in its 36<sup>th</sup> year of operation and has a commendable service history of providing critically needed interpreting and counseling services to the deaf and hard of hearing community as well as to other state agencies, judicial system, hospitals, and educational agencies.
3. Deafness is a low incidence and invisible disability.
4. Deaf and hard of hearing citizens of this state recognize the CDHI as the most viable, visible, and accessible state agency that can communicate with them. These citizens do identify the CDHI as their "state agency".

It is for these reasons that the CAD would like to see the CDHI continue to function as a self-standing viable agency meeting the needs of the deaf and hard of hearing citizens statewide.

However, if such a proposed consolidation of the CDHI into the DSS must be done as a part of the solution in resolving this budget crisis, we would like to strongly recommend that:

1. the functions of the CDHI continue as a cohesive unit within the DSS.
2. the consolidated agency needs to recognize the necessity for the service location and service delivery to be accessible and consumer-friendly to the deaf and hard of hearing consumers.
3. the CDHI advisory board be continued to function to provide meaningful and valuable input from the deaf and hard of hearing community, parents, and other agencies.

Thank you for your consideration of our input in this matter.